

HACKNEY ACTION

HACKNEY CARES?

When a product is given an enormous advertising campaign, you can be sure of either of two things: either the product is basically unnecessary, or, on the other hand, the product is basically no good. It's much the same situation in everyday life; the time to get worried is when those higher up start frantically reassuring you that everything's all right. Which is why, perhaps, the relatively recent publicity campaign telling us that 'Hackney Cares' should be taken with an element of caution. HACKNEY CARES. It's a bit like the Players Please slogan; you're not sure whether to take it as a statement of fact or as something you ought to believe even if it's probably untrue. One of the problems with publicity campaigns these days is that they often cost more than the things they are publicising. A good local example is the HACKNEY SUMMER HOLIDAY PLAY PROJECT. Not a bad little scheme, really. The kind of project a local IVS group or church organisation runs in many towns during the summer holidays without much fuss. The worrying thing about Hackney's summer scheme was that the glossy pamphlet produced at the end cost more than all the salaries and expenses of the helpers who ran the project. I'm sure the councillors liked it, though.

However, there have been much more serious problems connected with the social services in this town recently. Individually they reveal a great deal of incompetence at official level; incompetence with, in many cases, tragic consequences. Considered all together they are symptomatic of the total failure of the Council's political philosophy with regard to the care and wellbeing of the people in Hackney. From the point of view of many ordinary people in the borough, the welfare and health facilities obtainable are a disgrace, particularly since we have had now decades of almost continuous Labour rule, elected by people who believed that the Labour Party was their party committed to the advancement of their welfare. The following cases are, perhaps, only the most visible of the many failures of policy in the social services. Even if they were the only errors, there is a serious case that the Labour Council must answer. cont. on page 4

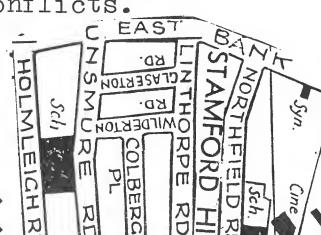
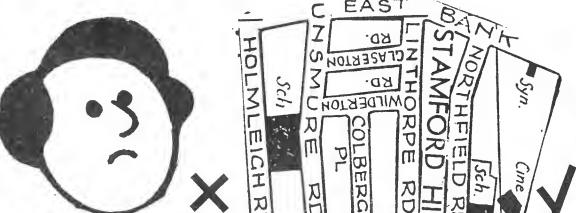
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN EAST BANK?

THE PEOPLE MUST BE CONSULTED

It is rumoured that the GLC have asked Hackney Borough Council to make the East Bank Area a general improvement area.

What is a general improvement area?

Briefly its aim is to improve the area by increasing home improvement grants, and giving stability and council commitment to the area. The council also invests money in road improvements and amenities for the area. The situation seems clear - the area and the people will benefit, but the situation in reality brings many conflicts.



✓ OWNER

1. The area has a secure future.
2. Environmental improvements will raise the value of your property.
3. You can take advantage of higher grants now available.
4. If you are a landlord, you can usually recover expenditure from increased rents.
5. The self-contained homes will be more attractive on any reletting.
6. You will be given an opportunity to comment on environmental improvement schemes.

✗

1. You will have to invest further capital in the property.
2. You will have to spend time and money preparing improvement schemes.
3. You may disrupt tenants, and the higher rents you will charge may destroy good tenant and landlord relationships.
4. The council may threaten to compulsorily purchase your property if you do not improve it.

✓ TENANT

1. More privacy to do what you want in your own home. Your own modern kitchen, bathroom, hot water and heating.
2. The area will have a secure future. There will be no schemes to knock it down and cause you upset.
3. You can take the opportunity to combine with your neighbours to form a residents' association which will have some influence on how the environmental improvement grants are spent.

✗

1. Rents will rise to cover the cost of improvement. You will not be able to oppose improvement unless you receive a rate rebate.
2. In London and attractive areas, existing tenants will often be displaced by occupiers with higher incomes.
3. In some cases your rates may go up.
4. In multi-occupied property some tenants will have to move.
5. Your rooms may be made smaller to fit in bathrooms and kitchens.

Above all the people must be involved in the plans of the General Improvement Area. The GLC and Hackney must ask the people now.

JULY 1972
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SOME 2,500 WOMEN DIE YEARLY of cancer at the neck of the womb. This can be prevented by a simple test, the cervical smear. A mobile caravan which will give this test is coming to Hackney in August. Plans are as follows: 31 July-4 Aug: Toch, Church Cres; 7-11 Aug: St Pauls Ch, Evering Rd; 14-18 Aug: Geffrys Ct, Kingsland Rd; 21-25 Aug: Hackney Town Hall. It's being organised by the Hackney Health Committee and the Women's National Cancer Control Campaign (Tel: 580 3322). The Stoke Newington Branch can be contacted c/o Mrs Rose McNulty, 3 Craven Clo, Craven Walk, N16. Offers of help badly needed.

Follow-up to the 68 Colvestone Crescent Story:

In August this house was for sale at £6,900; in December 1971 £7,300; as you remember it moved to £13,000 in June and four days later to £17,000. Now for tax reasons it is going empty for a year. What are we going to do about it?

The articles in this paper are written by local people and groups, and do not have to represent the views of Enterprise.

THE BEECHES A PUBLIC INQUIRY—NOW!

hypothermia or care on the cheap

The children in the Beeches, the private subnormality home in West Suffolk, were all placed by London boroughs. Tara Naiker of 33a Kyverdale Rd, N16, died there on 14th March 1972. The post mortem report on her states that the cause of death was bronco pneumonia from hypothermia. Prior to her death Mr and Mrs Fittan of 8 Norcombe House, Wedmore St, N19 complained of the medical care given to their daughter Katherine who was placed in the home by Islington Social Services. Since Press reports that both Mr and Mrs Naiker, and Mr and Mrs Fittan have asked the Home Secretary and Sir Keith Joseph to institute a public inquiry, other parents who made complaints about the Beeches in 1969 have come forward from Hackney. The Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the policy committee of Hackney Borough Council have decided to support the parents' request for a public inquiry at the meeting of the Hackney Borough Council policy committee on June 14th. Alderman L. Sherman is reported to have said "the Secretary of State will be asked to undertake a public inquiry at the earliest possible moment".

If the findings of the inquest of May 19 on the late Tara Naiker are not called into question by application to the Home Office to re-open the inquest, the public inquiry will have to rely on the findings of an inquest that had been decreed inadequate by M.B. Naiker's legal and medical advisers who have made a careful study of the report on accidental hypothermia by the Royal College of Physicians. Miss Susanna Laing who had personal experience of the treatment and care provided in the Beeches has written to the Town Clerk of Hackney requesting him to consider these points with regard to requesting the full council meeting to show their full support of Mrs Naiker's application to the home office by applying to a high court judge for the re-opening of the inquest.

S.Laing

Green Lanes Tenants' Association

The Green Lanes Tenants Association was formed early in 1971 at the request of Mr. A. Everett, the Community Officer for Hackney Borough Council. The Association took in all the flats that formed the old association of ALPERA that had dissolved some years ago.

History of the area

The area is quite old in history and on one side we have Finsbury Park and Manor House where in olden days there was a Manor House and a toll gate, and with Green Lanes being as its name suggests a Lane. The other side has the water works as its most interesting building and any who didn't know would think for all the world that it was a castle or folly. We then move on to Clissold Park with its large white house and there are many paintings exhibited from time to time at the Library in Church St, Stoke Newington of this house and surrounding area which takes in the old St. Mary's Church dating back to the Domesday Book, with some very interesting tombstones. It has been said that there was once a tunnel leading from the White House to the Church but I would not like to say whether this is fact or fiction. There is quite a lot of local history in the Stoke Newington part of the London Borough of Hackney, boasting such names as Daniel Defoe and Edgar Allan Poe.

The Beginnings
It was extremely hard going getting the Association together, and out of about 20 people who agreed to form a

Committee at the first meeting only 4 including me turned up at the second, two of whom were very willing but handicapped, one having a heart complaint and the other lady disabled with a stick. Anyway we said we would try on a trial period, and after getting out the first letters and bringing in the enrolment forms we then made out collection books and started with bingo. After our first bingo night the other ablebodied person beside myself sent in her resignation, but gradually after a long slow start we got a few more people interested and we have gone forward not in leaps and bounds but very modestly.

Our first year

In our first year we ran a weekly bingo club, a childrens/youth club now registered under the I.L.E.A. We have had a Jumble Sale, Christmas Party for over 100 children, Dance for Association members and friends which went down so fantastically that we are about to hold another one, and also the pensioners had a Christmas Parcel, but being so bogged down by work and illness in the Committee, it was very nearly spring before they got their parcels.

Housing Finance Bill

The most important thing that has hit this Association like all associations is the Housing Finance Bill, and a lot of work has been expended in this direction and our Association has so far a rally for 9th July 1972 organised by the Association of London Housing Estates, which I urge all associations to affiliate to, as by experience we have

found them extremely helpful in all facets of a Tenants Association, and we feel that it is money well spent. Our other fight unfortunately has to stay quiet for a little while but when it is over I promise you, you will know all the facts.

Apathy

The thing we have found most disheartening is the apathy of so many association members — they just will not put themselves out to attend meetings, even the A.G.M. Then volunteers and helpers are very slow in coming forward, and one finds that the same old donkeys are carrying the load all the time, and if only more people would stop to think that although we are here to serve and volunteered to do so, a little bit of help would not only ease the load but make it possible for so many other things to be done, like outings etc. People in flats seem to want to shut themselves away and let the rest of the world go by instead of realising that we are living in a close community and considering what we can do to make it better and happier for all. I do sincerely hope that this apathy does not exist in other associations to the degree that it does in the Green Lanes Tenants Association.

If you wish to join the Green Lanes Tenants' Association contact: Mrs Collier, 32 Chadworth House, Amwell Court, Green Lanes, N4.

Mrs Collier

information/ads...

Any meetings or events you want publicised will be inserted free.e.g.Tenants meetings, Union meetings, marches, public meetings, dances.

CAN YOU HELP? The Hackney Multiple Sclerosis Society desperately needs volunteers. If you are interested in helping in any way, or would like to know more, please contact: PAT HENDRICK, 34 ALCONBURY ROAD, CLAPTON, E5.

GENERAL Meeting — Centerprise, Monday July 17th, 7.30.
FREE TRANSPORT Meeting on Tues. July 25th at 7.45.

HANDS OFF MAPLEDENE — the Mapledene Report "Redevelopment or Improvement" prepared by AID for the Residents' Association — is in print, price 75p. available from Centerprise.

HACKNEY CLAIMANTS UNION — for help in all matters concerning Social Security. Meetings 12.30 WEDS. Office 2-5 Tues. & Thurs. at Centerprise.

OFF CENTRE — a consultation service for young people, at 41 Boleyn Road, N16. CALL Tues. evenings only, 6.30-9.30; WRITE to the Secretary, Off Centre, 41 Boleyn Road, N16 or PHONE 254 1620 any morning Mon-Fri.



Legal Aid and Advice
If you need it just ask

FREE aid and advice on housing, legal and social security matters. Thursday evenings between 6.30 & 7.30 at Centerprise.

BRENDAN BEHAN's "THE HOSTAGE" produced by Joan Littlewood, evenings at 8, Saturdays at 5 and 8. Theatre Workshop at the Theatre Royal, Stratford E15. Phone 534 0310.

SEE YOUR MP or Councillor — at 14a Graham Road between 7.30 and 8.15 every Friday.

NEIGHBOURS/Spatialfields to Whitechapel: photographs by Ron McCormick at the HALF MOON GALLERY, 27 Alie Street, E1, phone 480 6465 from 22 June — July 18, Thur. to Sun. 12-6.

LOCAL CHILDREN'S READING BOOK Hackney Halfterm Adventure, written by a local teacher and set in Hackney with a football theme. It is an exciting and realistic story which should appeal to many young readers because it is so near to their own experience. Price 20p; special terms for schools. From Centerprise, 34 Dalston Lane E8.

SUMMER HOLIDAY PLAY PROJECTS

Anyone who would like to help in any way with a play project in Holly Street or at Haggeston, please contact Maggie at Centerprise

any letters?

HOW I STARTED A PLAYGROUP by Barbara Berks

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I first became interested in working with children when my eldest daughter went to a Clinic Creche at the age of 3. I used to help if the assistants were away and I found a tremendous amount of satisfaction being with children. Eventually a vacancy occurred at the Clinic for a Creche Assistant. I applied and was accepted for the job.

PLAYGROUP COURSE IN DALSTON

A course for Playgroup Leaders was started at Richmond Road Methodist Church which I joined. I met other Mums at the course with just the same anxiety to know more about children, their play activities, their problems, their feelings of aggression and most of all the important fact that children are individuals and should be treated as such and given love, understanding and discipline to base their young lives. The Course proved to be a very good one and our tutor, Mrs Anita Crompton, was an exceptionally good teacher. We learned a lot from her and now felt ready to open my own Playgroup.

CONTACT THE COUNCIL

I already had a hall in mind which was large and spacious and had adequate toilet facilities etc. I contacted Mrs Frances Goldhill, who is the Playgroup Organiser for Hackney. Then she, together with the Medical Officer of Health came and inspected the hall and application for Registration was placed. Once I knew that the hall had been passed for 20 children to attend I formed a committee comprising Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, an assistant and myself as Play-leader. A committee meeting was called, and Mrs Goldhill kindly came and advised us on the finance side, informing us how to apply for a grant

from the council, and a fee of 20p per session was decided upon, and that the Playgroup would officially be named Morland Estate Playgroup. I was very lucky as most of the Mums of the children that attended the Creche wanted this new Playgroup as they were all aware of the need for their children to have more scope in their play. They worked very hard.

We were very fortunate, and didn't have to wait long for the grant as apparently I had opened it just the right time, the beginning of the council financial year, and so the grant went through very quickly.



HARD WORK BY ALL

I knew exactly what I wanted in this nice big hall and I had a Mothers meeting and asked them for all the help they could possibly give. I must say I owe them a great deal as they really did work wonders and before we knew, our Playgroup began to take shape. One of the fathers very kindly said he would make us a home corner that we shall always be grateful for as it was beautifully made and he and his wife painted and decorated it and provided the curtaining at the windows and doors.

I found an old cupboard standing outside an unused shop, brought it home and turned it

into a cooker, and gradually bit by bit a home corner was built up.

Then we planned a hospital corner and book corner and improvised with anything we could, until our grant could provide the finishing touches but the basic groundwork was there.



IT'S THE CHILDRENS PLAYGROUP

I decided it was time to set an opening date which was March 6th at 9.30 am. I must admit I felt a bit nervous about it all as one doesn't quite know how a new playgroup will fare. We all have qualms over this and that but I thought I shall know just as soon as the children come through the door and when they did come that morning and I saw how they so obviously loved it all I felt I was in with a fighting chance. I made the children understand that it was THEIR Playgroup and that we would work together to build it up, which is what we have done gradually. We've been open about 3½ months now, and the children have enjoyed painting, finger painting, pasting and cutting out, water and sand play, junk sticking, plasticine and experiencing clay and we've marvelled at the childrens adaptability to all these things.

Since receiving the grant we

have some new and lovely puzzles, of all varieties, bricks, constructional set, playplax, bead threading, peg board, wall charts, hammer pegs, musical instruments and of course a constant supply of paint and paper etc. The boys have a good train track and fort with soldiers and I hope to get them a garage and build it up with cars. Of course when I look around the Playgroup I can see there are so many more things we do need and I hope we will have, but I feel that the children themselves appreciate their play even more if they too can work towards new equipment rather than having it all at once.

The first part of our morning is devoted to free play when they can move from painting to clay to puzzles to doctors and nurses, to being mums and dads. Then we all clear up together, the children have a milk break with a piece of cheese, apple or fruit etc. Sandra, my assistant, has made some wonderful puppets, and together we work these much to the delight of the children. From then on it's exercise time and if the weather is nice we can go to the green at the back of the hall for games or even better we all walk to the fields opposite us. Then just before 12 o'clock we have our story which sends the children off home in a good way.

I love my work, it's a rewarding and happy job. I have my moments of course, when everything seems to go wrong in a morning, but then just as you feel you are not getting through to a particularly difficult child, and you feel really exhausted, she'll turn and say "I love you Barbara" and I honestly answered "and I love you too Emma". Then I know it's worthwhile.

A FABLE....

SHOCKING SCENES IN THE CRYPT-LEADING POLITICIAN CRUCIFIED

Folks of Trumpton witnessed what must be the most funny (both peculiar and ha-ha) event in local history last Saturday, since a strong supporter of Women's Lib bent on a force integral of sex and society terrorised the high street by throwing thoughts of Chairman Greer on the passers-by.

The occasion was the Annual General Meeting of the Young Conservatives at which the leading politician of our time, Herr Eunuch von Powell was the chief guest speaker.

DEMONSTRATORS

Herr von Powell avoided any

clash with crowds of demonstrators outside the crypt at initial stages by disguising himself as a 'guilty madman of Parliament' and subsequently by speaking (as always) from a bullet proof public telephone call box. He congratulated the police on meticulously and judiciously keeping down the disturbance.

HERR VON POWELL'S VISIONS

Inside Madam Chairman of the Monday District Club, wearing a biologically white chemise, embroidered with the Party emblem and signed 'NF', began by recalling the good days of old when black was still black and not at all beautiful. She carried on to praise the excellent work of Herr von Powell to which the audience rose as a coordinated whole to the chants of 'For he is a

jolly good fellow which no one dare deny...' for a good few days. At last Herr von Powell was given the microphone into which he began to shout accompanied with suitable gestures. He spoke on the British Foreign Policy advocating 'vivre Normandy', and annexing of Africa, South America and the Far and Middle East in order to afford Lebensraum for the super-saturated, undernourished and under-sheltered British populace, while nominating a certain Dr. Vorster as Chairman of MCC.

ALCOHOLIC STARTS FIRE

There was a pin-drop silence. Then suddenly, an alcoholic said to be a 'temporary resident of the crypt' threw a bottle of meths on the crypt door and set it alight.

HERR VON POWELL CRUCIFIED

Stepping out of his bullet-proof, Party-proof public telephone box, Herr von Powell actually attempted to assert his authority on the situation, indeed to dictate, ordering the audience back to their seats for his remaining five visions and threatening the demonstrators with deportation. Some tried to seek shelter in Herr von Powell's telephone box. There now ensued a terrible pitched battle to get into the kiosk with boxing, all-in wrestling, Come Dancing, followed by World in Action, Callan and the Persuaders, to the shrieks of petrified church-mice and men. Typhoon and Youth and the 400 decibel cries of 'Save our Souls'.

z.sardar

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cont. from page one

1970 Health Report

In March this year, New Society, a national magazine concerned mainly with aspects of individual and social welfare, printed an article about the obvious failings of the Health Department in an unnamed London Borough. All of the evidence for this article was taken in fact from the official Health Report. Among the many disturbing facts which came to light were the gross understaffing in many of the health departments, the increase in the infant mortality rate, the inadequacy of the ante-natal services, the very poor dental health of the school children, the lack of play-group provision, failure in providing adequate mental health facilities, and an obvious overlooking of the very bad working conditions which existed within the borough. The borough which was the subject of that article was Hackney. The question is though, why didn't the councillors ask what was happening locally? They after all were the first to receive copies of the report in question. It is most likely that few of them even read it. Yet they are supposed to serve our interests and in this case they obviously did no such thing. Can we ask that in future all department reports are fully debated in the council chamber and contributions to these debates made by members of the public?

The Case Of David Fane

On Wednesday 19th January, David Fane, a Senior Social Worker employed by Hackney Social Services Department, was given two and a half days to transfer to a "specially created" administrative job and to be placed under "close supervision". David Fane was a very highly regarded social worker in Hackney - at least highly regarded by his colleagues and by the people he helped. His crimes were apparently connected with his informal attitudes to the people he helped and his support of local community groups. At no time was there any real discussion about the case between the hierarchy or the councillors who make up the Social Services Committee - and the social workers who protested. What happened to Labour's public advocacy of 'participation',

And yet many of the councillors are probably card carrying trade union members. Surely here was a case of employer victimisation?

Hackney Cares For The Disabled ?

In the Evening Standard, 9th November 1971, Des Wilson (everybody's favourite public conscience) wrote an article about the problems of helping disabled people. He criticised some local authorities for failing to seek out cases of disablement in need of help but singled out for special praise none other than our own council. He stated, "Perhaps the most imaginative attempt to seek out the missing disabled has been made by Hackney Borough Council. Including a motorcade through the streets on a Saturday morning, the issue of 25,000 leaflets, and 10,000 pre-paid cards, and the use of Jimmy Saville to publicise the survey." Gosh! That's really fabulous, isn't it? I mean, isn't it? A Hackney social worker has written of this scheme: "What has happened is that the Welfare Department who were already overloaded with cases have had to take the brunt of all the new referrals resulting from the campaign without any extra provision being made to deal with the extra work load. Resulting in very poor response by the department to the many new referrals. Looking at the complete lack of extra facilities, one can only reach the conclusion that the entire publicity campaign was for the benefit not of the disabled but of the councillors concerned in Hackney."

Hackney Summer Holiday Play Project - 1971

Although this has already been mentioned, and does not directly concern the Social Services Department in Hackney, it is part of the same concern by Hackney councillors and their officials to be more interested in the publicity accruing from a particular campaign than with the actual value of the project itself. Certainly it is a good thing that there are summer play projects, even if there aren't many decent play areas throughout the year, but the scale of this one certainly didn't justify the incredible cost of producing the glossy report. It is interesting to note the estimates for the project and the actual cost. In most items they are pretty similar but in the case of the report it was originally budgeted for £75 but in fact cost £620. An increase of 825% ! The total salaries for the organiser and site leaders only came to £564.

Hackney Maternity

Services

One of the great rallying cries of the early labour movement was for decent health facilities. For a short time after the Second World War it looked as though these demands were being met but now we find ourselves once again going back to early demands. There is now a substantial body of evidence, collected by local women, which shows that the maternity services locally are in no way adequate to facilities which women regard as their right. All three local maternity units are housed in very old buildings, poorly equipped with basic sanitary requirements - baths, wash-basins and toilets - with no provision for privacy if required, and so on. The ante-natal and post-natal services are equally bad and consequently too little used by local mothers for safety's sake. However, this is obviously not a situation that has arisen suddenly; the maternity services locally have been bad for a long time. Many of these inadequate facilities are the direct responsibility of the council whereas although the hospitals may be technically outside the jurisdiction of the council, certainly Hackney Council could act as a very powerful pressure group in modernising and improving the services for the people they serve, if they so wished.

The Beeches

Children's Home

There has recently been a great deal of publicity about the Beeches children's home in Suffolk at which a local mentally handicapped child died. Evidence in the Sunday Times suggested that heating in the home was insufficient and could have adversely affected the children. This home is used by the Hackney Social Services Department and children from this area are sent there. Whether or not the home was properly run is at the moment unanswerable. What is serious is that when a local mother became worried about her child's health at the home, the Social Services department failed to take an interest. As the Hackney Gazette reported: "Mrs. Naiker is critical of the Hackney Social Services. 'Three weeks before Tara died I said if she was not moved I would take her home myself. They said they would come and see me about the whole thing, but nobody came'."

Assuming that the department regularly visited the home and found it satisfactory (and we don't know this),

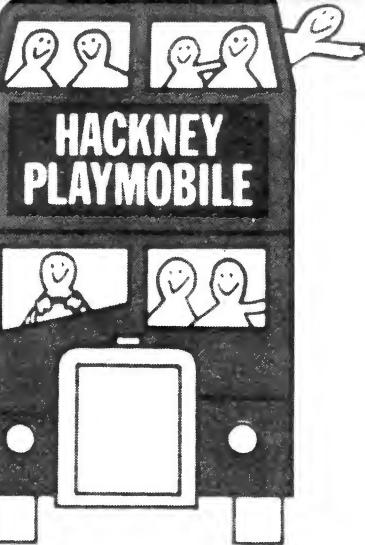
acknowledge a mother's concern is certainly not good enough.

Labour Party

What has happened in Hackney, the failure of the Labour Party to genuinely represent and involve itself in real grass roots politics is certainly not an isolated case. At GLC level and, of course, nationally, the Labour Party has severed its links with the ordinary people and is more interested in power than in the politics of change. A real socialist party would not have allowed itself to have become so remote from the demands and concerns of the people, and as a result many of the failures of the policy listed above would not have arisen. These days we rarely see our councillors active in the wards, explaining their policies, asking for suggestions, and so on. It was interesting to read an analysis of the kinds of people on Labour's list for GLC candidates in London. Totally unrepresentative of the voting population. Only 15% of the candidates were women and only 2% of the total number of candidates came from working class people in manual jobs. It is because the Labour party is now dominated by careerist technocrats, that on major policy issues affecting London people the London Labour Party has failed to take a stand. It has compromised on the vicious Tory Housing Finance Bill, and it failed to take a stand on the question of free public transport in London - a clear issue involving socialist principles.

The lesson is clear. If we want change, if we want to build the good society, we will have to do it for ourselves. There is no longer any point in expecting the Labour Party in any way to make the changes we need. The process of building a socialist movement with clear priorities for change will have to start again. There are though, many issues being fought already, despite the Labour Party, at both community level and on the industrial front. These campaigns, for better welfare services, for better housing, not just shoddy high-rise flats which councillors mistake for decent housing, for decent working conditions, need linking up. In Hackney there are dozens of groups fighting on single issues: citizens rights, claimants unions, better hospital facilities, low rents and better standards of housing provision, real educational needs, more playgroups. Together they could form the basis for making real inroads into the local domination of power by the Labour Party.

KEN WORPOLE



HACKNEY PLAYMOBILE

Playbuses have caught on so quickly that it's surprising no one thought of them earlier. There has been an increasing concern in this country for the development of our pre-schoolers, but an acute lack of nursery places, due to the 'freeze' imposed by the government in 1960.

As a result of these two factors, communities began to help themselves. Mothers began to form groups to provide play facilities for their children, and the Pre-School Playgroup Association was born. At first these groups were largely middle-class, but now the movement has spread into working class areas. Hackney has a number of such groups, as well as some run by the Council, and is fortunate in having a Borough Playgroup Organiser.

However playgroups are basically voluntary and parent-controlled, and find it difficult to get going without suitable premises, or a nucleus of fairly stably resident parents with time, energy, enthusiasm and know-how. Mobile playbuses can fill a need in areas of redevelopment and rehousing, and hopefully will awaken interest in preschool education, where none existed before, and then provide support and information.

Liverpool EPA, who were probably the first on the road, reckon that a playmobile can function for £500 a year, with salaries added. But it hasn't always been easy to get the concept of a playbus accepted. Grimesthorpe in Sheffield warn 'don't try the insurance brokers, they have mild hysterics at the thought of insuring a bus for play and not for hire'. They also had a disastrous experience the first day, when the chain of the lavatory the toddlers were allowed to use was pulled and everything fell out of the cistern. Westmister have solved that particular difficulty by installing two caravan type cabinets at the top of the stairs.

We now have our own bus in Hackney, which is being converted by Hackney Downs School. We hope to be able to give it a trial run during the summer holidays and voluntary helpers will be welcomed.

pauline weinstein

Dear Sir,

From my address above you will see that the first issue of your paper, Hackney Action, has obviously aroused me to write to you regarding '250 empty houses' and as you already know I had a long discussion with one of your team last week. I too am appalled by the state in which you find '250' empty houses, and whilst I can see the reason for your article, I cannot let the picture on page 3 go by being labeled Spurstowe Road, as this is emphatically NOT Spurstowe Road; the picture to the left is I regret to say Spurstowe Road and since your publication some kind fellow has added a settee for further comfort. You will probably know too that I, as one owner occupier, and several others are sitting on the fence, the 'political fence', waiting to hear the result of a public enquiry held on Feb 1st at our Town Hall: to hear if our house is to be torn down at a stroke. Others sit and wait to be rehoused and it is the apparent policy of the council to let a road that is subject to a compulsory purchase order to be run down deliberately, to make it even more an apparent 'eyesore'. Three months ago I complained to the Public Health Dept., requesting that the rubbish be removed from the neighbouring premises, with no avail. In March 1970 when our mortgage was granted by the local council, 'there was no redevelopment, no slum clearance' - within NINE months of that mortgage being granted, WHAM! and some hundreds of £s later, we are in this unique position, as far as we are concerned but I now understand that it has happened to other poor souls in our borough who tried to make their PAD fit to live in; the Mapledene-ites, the Malvern-ites, the Gayhurst Road folk, not to mention the De Beauvoir Town controversy. Where will it all end? Does Hackney care? Why is Mare Street being run down, why has Sainsbury's taken their shop away, why is the whole area being left to rot???? Make Hackney a nicer place to live in!!!! I see that even the new Holly Street area has at least 25 tenants who want to move out already..... Hackney Action! I am all for it, but not at my expense, and my experience.

Yours sincerely (name and address supplied)

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letter

Spurstowe Road, E8

HACKNEY COMMITTEE AGAINST RACIALISM

The Hackney Committee against Racism was formed in March 1970 when Enoch (Rivers of Blood) Powell was making racism respectable and threatening the whiter-than-whites with a rising tide of black babies. The initiative was taken by the local district committee of the London Co-operative Society; a committee of activists was selected at the inaugural meeting, which has met monthly ever since, the composition being roughly 50/50 individual members and delegates from Hackney Trades Union, immigrant, religious and community organisations. Although three Labour councillors were present at the original meeting and gave us a somewhat qualified blessing, fearing that we might be attempting to do the work of the Community Relations Council, and two - John Kotz and Bob Masters - have spoken from our platform at open-air meetings, the Labour Party as such has never got involved. Not that we wish to indulge in party politics, nor have we room with anyone with an axe to grind. Our intention was to be a campaigning political, but strictly non-Party organisation, fighting the ideological fight against racism, mainly by propaganda of all kinds.

The Political Committee of the London Co-op have several times lent us their loudspeaker van free of charge, and duplicated leaflets for us. They have also donated money, for which we have been most grateful.

Last year we concentrated our efforts to oppose the Immigration Act, starting with a leaflet in February, as soon as the Bill saw the light of day. In April we had a big march through the borough, which included a decorated lorry, loaned by CND, filled with children, both black and white. This campaign was carried on with meetings in markets, a poster parade and the

collection of hundreds of signatures to a national petition which was presented in Parliament by Sid Bidwell MP. We also cooperated with the Hackney Trades Council in their joint campaign, including two motorcades and conferences against both the Industrial Relations and the Immigration Bills.

The most recent appearance of our banner was outside the Islington Tory HQ in July this year, where the Monday Club congregated in force with their candidate Mr. Devonald-Lewis, to hear Enoch Powell's latest racist outburst. We have protested to ITV and the BBC for the disproportionate amount of time they devote to this charlatan, but maybe they think he is a future Tory leader, who must be cultivated, just in case...? Previously we picketed the Hackney Central Tory AGM, on the shameful occasion when they elected Enoch as their "patron", whatever that may mean.

Before the Council Elections last year, we sent a questionnaire to the candidates on their attitude to racism. None of the Tories replied, but we had several positive replies from Labour and Communist candidates, and this was followed by a joint meeting with leading Labour Party members, at which they expressed their firm opposition to any kind of discrimination and their determination to press any future Labour Government to repeal the Immigration Act.

Following the election of the Labour Council we took up with them the question of the "ghetto" estates, which had been causing us increasing concern. From this evolved a Community Affairs sub-committee, which campaigns for better conditions on the older and neglected housing estates where the lack of amenities and general rundown together with rapid population turnover has created racial antagonism and the death of community activities. We eventually met Cllr. Ken Wilson and put our points, which had

been reinforced by a door-to-door enquiry in Wigan House. Lack of adequate caretaking staff, and no resident supervisor turned out to be the basic need. Things have improved somewhat on this estate, but conditions in Nisbet House continue to deteriorate, to name but one where we hope to see some action soon. We have established friendly relations also with the Kingsmead tenants, who are fighting a valiant battle with the GLC for better amenities, particularly a community hall.

We have still had no satisfaction on the question of discrimination in housing. No official or councillor has been able to explain why so many immigrant families end up in the worst and oldest estates, whereas some of the more modern ones such as George Downing are almost pure white. Ability to pay is not a valid reason, since many immigrants earn high wages, keep beautiful homes and in many cases there are two or more wage-earners in the family .

We ended our second year with a well-attended Town Hall meeting on "Apartheid... our business?" at which the film "End of Dialogue" left no doubt as to the nature of the South African Government. The Bishop of Stepney, the Rt.Rev Trevor Huddleston, took the chair, and recalled his years of work in South Africa. He declared that "the peace of the world depends utterly on whether the black and white races can live together effectively" which is obviously impossible so long as the poverty gap continues to expand. A South African speaker pointed out that non-violent methods of opposition are no longer possible there and Joan Lester MP emphasised the financial tie-up between Big Business interests in Britain and the Apartheid regime. A second quote from the bishop can provide a good reason for our continued existence: "The only issue that matters in the world today is the issue of race relations."

daphne morgan



THEATRE ROYAL

The Theatre Royal is for the people. Theatre Workshop arrived there in 1953, took root, grew and flourished. The company was experienced in gaining audiences who had never visited theatres. They made contact with the local people, formally in local evening classes, debates and meetings, and informally in children's theatre, pub entertainment and improvisation in and around the theatre. Drama was created as a living event arising from contact with a community, research, knowledge of ritual and the ability to provoke participation. The building was used for Folk and Jazz concerts, meetings, exhibitions and confrontations.

Export or close.

For many years the Company refused to sell their productions to commercial managements and every endeavour was made to find subsidies for Theatre Workshop: failure to do so meant that we had to export or close. From 1959 on, a series of brilliantly successful productions - FINGS AINT WOT THEY USED T'BE, MAKE ME AN OFFER, SPARRERS CAN'T SING, A TASTE OF HONEY, THE QUARE FELLOW, THE HOSTAGE, and finally in 1963 OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR, went to the West End. Financially successful, nevertheless every time a production moved from Stratford, it took with it an entire trained company of actors and technicians. This erosion finally became disheartening and after OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR in 1963 the company had to pause for a while.

At the same time the local need for education, glamour and participation increased. An attempt to create a contemporary theatre area, a modern Vauxhall Gardens was made in 1967 as part of the Lea Valley Project. It was to be equipped for the learning of new skills and the use of drama and games as stimulus and therapy for participants as well as performers. The project came to nothing in Britain then but the idea was taken up in various parts of the world and artists from Theatre Workshop assisted its development. Now it is possible to see small shoots appearing from the seeds sown then.



Theatre workshop at the THEATRE ROYAL -what for ?

Demolition.

The Theatre Royal was used by companies who put on plays, drag shows, music-hall etc. but with no sense of community, failed to gain a public. With the slow process of demolition for redevelopment around the theatre, the quality of life deteriorated in Stratford, especially for the children. Theatre Workshop decided to start again, create playgrounds and give the building over to work and play areas for children; plays were produced, films made and old ties with the community were renewed. The old game re-started: offers of transfers or sites in more fashionable areas. The developers are preparing to demolish one of the theatre's most attractive and useful assets, the Victorian Long Bar, and also the workshops and storage areas rented from the Council. The stalls in Angel Lane which made real street entertainment as well as employing the coster families, have gone. Our neighbours now are separated from us by areas of desolation which will become shops and offices with high rents and a commuting daytime-only population.

New buildings and a grant.

Now however everything is becoming more active - more positive. In the redevelopment we ourselves will have some land on which to extend the theatre's activities. Many local needs are being brought to us and in our own new building we can supply some of them. We will build a coffee bar, a disco, a restaurant and an experimental theatre. We will continue the ever-experimental work by Joan Littlewood and the company in the main theatre, and the small theatre will be for local young people. For the first time Stratford will have a heart and soul, a bright centre with many uses.

We face new problems - the new buildings, providing 'housing units', create isolationist attitudes and we are only slowly reaching people, largely through tenants' associations. We have lost our immediate neighbours and our new ones are only just beginning to feel we belong to them. Our opening play, THE LONDONERS, played to appreciative crowds for nine weeks, and THE HOSTAGE, which has just opened, should do the same. This is a sane and marvellously funny play by Brendan Behan, who wrote:- "I respect kindness to human beings first of all. I have a total irreverence for anything connected with society except that which makes the roads safer, the beer stronger, and food cheaper and old men and old women warmer in the winter and happier in the summer."

For the first time we have a grant from the Arts Council. No other theatre stayed alive, let alone thrived for twenty years, without one. So we can find out and provide the things that people want. What do you want?

Photos: top left by John Roberts.
top right - Joan Littlewood by Christina Carr.
left - A Theatre Royal production of the Hostage, photo by Donald Cooper.

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